

M A R C H 2 0 0 4

REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

Medicare Payment Policy



The Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC) is an independent federal body established by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (P.L. 105–33) to advise the U.S. Congress on issues affecting the Medicare program. In addition to advising the Congress on payments to health plans participating in the Medicare+Choice program and providers in Medicare’s traditional fee-for-service program, MedPAC is also tasked with analyzing access to care, quality of care, and other issues affecting Medicare.

The Commission’s 17 members bring diverse expertise in the financing and delivery of health care services. Commissioners are appointed to three-year terms (subject to renewal) by the Comptroller General and serve part time. Appointments are staggered; the terms of five or six Commissioners expire each year. The Commission is supported by an executive director and a staff of analysts, who typically have backgrounds in economics, health policy, and public health.

MedPAC meets publicly to discuss policy issues and formulate its recommendations to the Congress. In the course of these meetings, Commissioners consider the results of staff research, presentations by policy experts, and comments from interested parties. (Meeting transcripts are available at www.medpac.gov.) Commission members and staff also seek input on Medicare issues through frequent meetings with individuals interested in the program, including staff from congressional committees and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), health care researchers, health care providers, and beneficiary advocates.

Two reports—issued in March and June each year—are the primary outlet for Commission recommendations. This volume fulfills MedPAC’s requirement to submit an annual report on Medicare payment policy. In addition to annual reports and occasional reports on subjects requested by the Congress, MedPAC advises the Congress through other avenues, including comments on reports and proposed regulations issued by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, testimony, and briefings for congressional staff.

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Glenn M. Hackbarth, J.D., Chairman
Robert D. Reischauer, Ph.D., Vice Chairman
Mark E. Miller, Ph.D., Executive Director

February 28, 2004

The Honorable Richard B. Cheney
President of the Senate
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Vice President:

I am pleased to submit a copy of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission's March 2004 *Report to the Congress: Medicare Payment Policy*. This report fulfills MedPAC's legislative mandate to evaluate Medicare payment issues and make specific recommendations to the Congress.

The report begins by examining trends in Medicare spending, beneficiary financial liability, and access to care. The report also reports on the Commission's work in assessing quality of care. It assesses the adequacy of Medicare payments and makes update recommendations for all of the major providers serving Medicare beneficiaries. It also provides recommendations on payment and eligibility for private plans in Medicare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn M. Hackbarth".

Glenn M. Hackbarth, J.D.
Chairman

Enclosure



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The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House of Representatives
U.S. House of Representatives
H232 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

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Chairman

Enclosure

Acknowledgments

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